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ASPIRA SCHOLARSHIP AND LOAN CENTER  
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ANNUAL REPORT  
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Contractor : ASPIRA, INC.  
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Forward progress and the expansion of knowledge regarding the educational needs of Puerto Rican youth characterized the year just concluded. In most areas, of all work performed, the ASPIRA Scholarship and Loan Center staff surpassed the achievements of previous years. The dedication, enthusiasm, increased skills and knowledge and carefully devised planned methods and procedures were some of the reasons which accounted for the particular high level of achievement. The following is a descriptive account of some of the major areas which engaged the energies and attention of the Center's staff.

#### DEVELOPMENT OF OPPORTUNITIES

The overriding objective for the Center was that of assisting and securing the necessary post-secondary institutional placements for those students referred to the center. It became imperative, therefore, that early in the year opportunities be clearly identified so as to accommodate whatever number of students would visit our doors.

#### FIELD VISITS TO COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

In-office conferences and field visits with admissions and financial aid officers, letters and telephone calls were used to secure the necessary commitments or to assess the likelihood that these placements could be developed. Colleges were contacted to secure catalogs, admissions and financial aid forms in sufficient

quantities for the use of both staff and students. With those colleges we were not able to contact through personal conferences, information was requested through mail and telephone regarding essential questions of admissions procedures, financial aid, special programs for the disadvantaged, etc. Literature was obtained in sufficient quantities from the schools and through the purchase of important reference books and pamphlets.

Particular contacts with college personnel included the securing of the following information: - the specific admission procedures used by the school including deadline dates, general academic requirements, possible financial aid package, and the nature of any special program of potential direct use or relevance to the students we serviced. These conferences also included a discussion of the ASPIRA Scholarship and Loan Center's goals and philosophy.

Although most schools expressed an interest in our students, it was often the case, that these expressions of interest were somewhat superficial. Many schools had not made any special provisions for dealing with the kind of students we would be referring. It, therefore, became necessary for us to provide some real understanding of our students' needs.

The so called "C" student was the most difficult to interpret to many colleges and universities. With the tendency by schools

to want to deal with poor Puerto Rican students by judging them as if they were middleclass mainland students, these conferences often assumed the air of an information giving session to a listener who was often uninformed about the needs of these students. All of the Scholarship and Loan Center counselors participated in communicating with college personnel. In some cases these contacts were initiated by the director and assistant director. Priorities were set by the center as to which institutions should be visited or invited for conferences.

The priorities included contacts with the City University of New York, The State University and large private universities within the New York Metropolitan area. Contacts with the City University became more important than in previous years due to the schools increased interest and implementation of special programs. "The One Hundred Scholars" program, for example, addressed itself to the needs of some of the students we serviced. Many of these students, who were guaranteed admissions, nevertheless needed encouragement and other supportive services which would help them avail themselves of the opportunity. The City University admits the largest number of students known to us. The school's Office of Admissions Services was helpful in sharing with us information about all of the school's programs and consulted with us regarding the needs of our students as it continued to review

and develop programs.

Special visits were made to the State University of New York to thirteen of its campuses. The State University is the second largest institution for the placement of our students. In actuality, each campus had to be dealt with as if they were separate institutions.

Large private universities in the Metropolitan Area were visited since they represented a potential source for the admission of large number of our students. New York University, St. John's University and Pace College lead among the private schools accepting referrals from us.

A strong tendency by most schools to adhere to traditional indices in considering students made the task of the Scholarship and Loan Center staff difficult and often frustrating. Even when traditional academic indices were relaxed, it was not without considerable ambivalence on the schools' part. The schools with special programs expressed the greatest interest in our students but these programs tended to be limited in their capacity to deal with a substantial number of students or to fully provide the necessary remedial or enrichment courses.

With a few notable exceptions, schools resisted our attempts to secure specific commitments for a particular number of students which they would accept even after the school provided the specific

criteria for the kind of referrals which they would be likely to accept. Some schools presented somewhat vague criteria. Commitments for financial aid were not made, although assurances were given that if the student was accepted some financial aid would be provided. Our staff dealt with these resistances in an assertive manner but in most cases accommodated itself to accepting the schools insistence on adhering to what they believe was their prerogative - that is, of being the final judge as to the students who would be accepted to their campus.

A problem of considerable consequence was the nature of the special programs provided, particularly when enrichment courses were given. All the special programs were oriented for Black students and the supervision and administration of the programs were staff with Black personnel. Students previously placed by our center reported that as a result many of the programs have little relevance to their own needs and experience. It was apparent that even with New York City Schools where the Black and Puerto Rican population does not differ greatly, the schools which had special programs had a Black student orientation. It was further apparent that a tacit quota existed and that it overwhelmingly favored the Black students. An attempt was made by our staff to discuss this area with college personnel. It is our impression that the schools are slowly becoming more sensitive to the expressed needs of Puerto Rican students and some schools

have expressed some intention to respond to this need. It has become clear to the Scholarship and Loan Center that more work has to be done in order to help colleges and universities increase their receptivity to Puerto Rican youth.

The attempt to increase opportunities on behalf of our constituency increased the number of contacts with other institutions and programs dealing with higher education. Some of these contacts were essential since they increased our knowledge and sophistication which in turn made the staff more competent to deliver services. Our limited resources impelled us to seek the assistance of others.

The College Entrance Examination Board, New York State Department of Education, United States Office of Education, and the National Association of College Admissions Counselors are among the many organizations which were of inestimable value to us as resources for information and as enablers in many of our attempts to achieve our objectives. Many individual college officials were also of assistance.

An obvious fact, confirmed by this year's experience is that, in the development of opportunities for disadvantaged youth, knowledgeable and skilled personnel is an essential pre-condition. Admission procedures, financial aid, special programs and knowledge regarding available resources is vast, complex and ever changing. Formal training for the acquisition

of skills in this area is limited or non-existent. Past experience and newly acquired knowledge and skills during the year attributed in large measure to the success of this year's program. The counselors' ability to use, by first seeking them out, important resources increased the center's capabilities to deliver services.

PREPARING THE STUDENT TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF DEVELOPED OPPORTUNITIES

The majority of the students we served were high school youth. It became an obtrusive fact to the Scholarship and Loan Center and to ASPIRA that Puerto Rican students have the highest dropped out rate than any other minority group. Obtrusive as well is the fact that of the relatively low percentage that complete high school, few seem to be encouraged to continue their formal education. Based on these and other factors, an attempt was made to increase our efforts to bring the problem to the attention of responsible and the proper school personnel.

Through the Bureau of Education and Vocational Guidance, the division in the New York City School System responsible for all school guidance services, efforts were made to assist the guidance personnel to become more sensitized to the particular population we were servicing. The Bureau cooperated in disseminating information about ASPIRA's services and providing us with valuable information regarding our students. Considering the bureaucratic difficulties often encountered with this school

system, it is to the credit of the Bureau that their assistance was always available and enthusiastically provided. The Bureau provided the Scholarship and Loan Center staff as well as other ASPIRA counselors with information regarding high school programs, transcripts of students, as well as report on particular students. Contacts with the Bureau was primarily maintained between the Scholarship and Loan Center director and the Bureau's director. It is our impression that as a result of the interest of the top level personnel of the Bureau, high school guidance counselors are becoming more sensitized to the special needs of the Puerto Rican students. Directives affecting our students, which came from the director of the Bureau, were responded to in a positive manner. Members of our staff were often invited to participate in programs for guidance counselors.

Through the effort of the guidance counselors, high school principals often gained knowledge and increased their interest in our program. On a significant number of occasions the students first knowledge of our program came through this personnel.

RECRUITMENT

Almost all students serviced by the Scholarship and Loan Center during the year were referred directly by the ASPIRA educational counselors working out of the three ASPIRA borough-wide centers in Manhattan, Brooklyn and Bronx. The students

were seniors in high school who came to the counselors and were seen initially for an intake interview. These youngsters were members of the ASPIRA Clubs or came directly to the counselor who in turn referred them to an ASPIRA Club. By the time he was referred to the Scholarship and Loan Center for post-secondary placement, he had been oriented as to the agency's goals and objectives, had been a member of an ASPIRA Club, might have received other social services and had completed an educational plan.

The "Leadership Development and Identity Program" (the Clubs program) is the primary vehicle through which the agency recruits and eventually involves the students in order to develop his leadership potential and encourage and support educational aspirations. The clubs recruit members in the high school where they are officially sanctioned. There are presently over fifty three ASPIRA Clubs in those New York City High Schools where there is a high concentration of Puerto Rican students. Within the school, the clubs use traditional methods for recruiting members.

Other students first come into contact with the agency as a result of direct referrals from the schools. This latter method brings a smaller number than the clubs since the agency emphasizes club membership whenever possible before it provides services.

A small number of students were referred directly to the Scholarship and Loan Center from outline communities including Long Island, New Jersey and Connecticut.

Conferences for Puerto Rican high school seniors were introduced during the past year as another method of recruitment. Two such conferences at each of the ASPIRA centers were held under the coordination of the Scholarship and Loan Center and active cooperation of the three ASPIRA centers. The conferences recruited previously known students who had not made plans to continue their education beyond high school and previously unknown students. At the conferences the students were provided with information and were helped to begin making an educational plan.

COLLEGE INTERVIEW MEETING FOR HIGH SCHOOL JUNIORS

Approximately 320 students and 70 college representatives attended the meeting held May 9th, 1969 at the Park Sheraton Hotel. Considering the inclement weather, the attendance was close to what we had projected. It had been feared that our concentration on seniors during the last few months would negatively affect this activity. From all indications the results of the meeting were more positive than in previous years. A special effort will be made to use the information gathered at this meeting for follow-up by the educational counseling staff.

RECOGNITION CEREMONY FOR GRADUATING H. S. SENIORS

Close to 500 students, parents and school representatives attended the Recognition Ceremony for Graduating High School Seniors. This activity was an attempt to recognize, through a formal ceremony, the achievement of many students who were potential dropped-outs but who, nevertheless, overcame serious obstacles and not only completed their high school education, but plan to continue with a post-secondary education.

PROCEDURES

Each Scholarship and Loan Center counselors was assigned to work closely with one of the three ASPIRA borough centers. The Scholarship and Loan Center counselors visited the center to which he had been assigned at least once a week. He met with the center director and the counselor at which times, all memos previously sent from the Scholarship and Loan Center giving information about post-secondary institutions, special programs, admissions, financial aid, etc., were reviewed. These memos were prepared by the Scholarship and Loan Center counselors after contacts with admissions and financial aid officers, and described the programs in particular schools and the definite referral plan which had been agreed to with the Scholarship and Loan Center.

The Scholarship and Loan Center counselors have been responsible for distributing all information to the borough centers including literature and results of conferences and meetings.

Through the weekly visits, the center counselors received considerable training regarding all aspects of admissions and financial aid. The result of this training during the last year has been encouraging. The knowledge of the borough center counselors regarding admissions and financial aid has vastly increased. As a result, these counselors are able to perform many of the functions previously performed solely by the Scholarship and Loan Center counselors.

The borough center counselors are able to help students more specifically to develop their post-secondary school educational plans. The borough center counselors helped the students with specific information regarding different types of schools and to arrive at a suitable type of school and program. The borough center counselors explained the Parent's Confidential Statement and later reviewed it with the student or parents whenever necessary before it was forwarded to the Educational Testing Service. The students were helped to secure and complete application forms for various institutions whenever necessary.

After the student had decided to apply to an institution and had completed at least one application, he was referred to the Scholarship and Loan Center counselor. The Scholarship

Center counselor reviewed all forms to make certain that everything was in order. The application was then forwarded to the school with the ASPIRA stamp.

TRAINING

Staff turnover in the borough centers had some negative effects on the level of efficiency which the new procedures and methods attempted to improve. As a result of the turnover, the Scholarship and Loan Center staff attempted to develop an on-going training program.

Early in September a two week intensive training workshop was held for the Scholarship and Loan Center and borough center counselors. The Scholarship and Loan Center arranged, coordinated and participated in ten (10) sessions of the workshops. Experts in post-secondary and higher education participated as consultants. Although some of the effects of the training was lost as a result of staff turnover, it was helpful to those remaining and set the qualitative tone for what was to be expected from each counselor during the year.

Through the regular visits to the borough centers, training went on continuously. This often entailed lengthy and intensive sessions with individual and groups of counselors. It was our observation that new counselors, even those who had had previous experience in some kind of educational counseling, lack the expertise necessary in counseling for post-secondary school

placements for disadvantaged youth.

As a result of the Scholarship and Loan Center's work with the center counselors, we are gratified that a secondary gain of the method and procedures employed, in itself, trained several individuals who will be using their acquired knowledge on behalf of disadvantaged youth at some other setting.

CONSULTATIVE SERVICES

As the only professional staffed agency servicing Puerto Rican youth with educational counseling, the Scholarship and Loan Center was called upon to provide information and guidance to a variety of institutions, groups and individuals. Thousands of individuals heard or received literature regarding Puerto Rican youth, their needs and expert suggestions as to how they might be assisted.

CONCLUSIONS

The result of our efforts during the program year that just concluded are encouraging. We feel confident that the knowledge and experience gained will have a definite and significant carry over into the coming year. There is sufficient indication that some methods should be tried in a more intensive manner. The conferences for seniors, for example, have the potential for assisting a greater number of students with their post-high school plans. The conferences we held were modeled after the ASPIRA Educational Counseling workshop.

These conferences did not only provide information about higher education but actually assisted the student with the mechanics of applying to a school and committed the student to follow-up with his plans.

A true indication that progress was made can be ascertained through a statistical analysis. With the same staff as in previous years we were able to place more students, 761, in comparison to last year's figure - 667, and process more applications - 1572.

More financial aid was made available to our students. This year's figure-\$367,683 - last year's \$200,661. More difficult to measure or evaluate, but highly significant, is our impression that the quality of our services improved.

The staff was composed of more experience counselors than in the past. The staff was better known and called upon by institutions and community groups more frequently. We started the training of many more counselors to become knowledgeable about the college placements of disadvantaged Puerto Rican youth.

The training which the Scholarship and Loan Center counselors were able to provide to the other educational counselors in ASPIRA resulted in the placement of an additional number of students. These students were not directly processed by the Scholarship and Loan Center but were assisted in their placement

by the borough centers' counselors. Two hundred additional number of Aspirantes were placed in this manner so that the total number of students placed by the agency was 901.

September 1969

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S U M M A R Y

Students Entering Colleges at City University.....	335
Students Entering Colleges at State University.....	77
Students Entering Private Institutions.....	256
Students Entering Vocational & Technical Schools.....	33
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Total number of Student Placement.....	701

S T A T I S T I C A L R E P O R T

July 1st, 1968 to June 30, 1969

1. Student Referrals .....	730
2. Number of Applications Sent.....	1572
3. Number of Acceptances.....	706
4. Number of Rejections.....	92
5. Number of Students Placed.....	513
6. Total Financial Aid Granted.....	PENDING
a. with commitment for Financial Aid.....	PENDING
b. pending decision for Financial Aid.....	PENDING
7. Contacts with Students.....	5189
a. Mail.....	2790
b. Telephone.....	1623
c. Personal.....	776
8. Contacts with Parents.....	495
a. Mail.....	85
b. Telephone.....	262
c. Personal.....	148
9. Visits to Centers.....	109
10. Contacts with Counselors.....	317
11. Contacts with Post-Secondary Institutions.....	1737
a. In Office.....	25
b. Out of Office.....	44
c. Mail.....	1263
d. Telephone.....	405
12. Number of Institutions Contacted...	539

13. Contacts with other Community Agencies and Institutions.	163
a. Personal.....	29
b. Mail.....	63
c. Telephone.....	71
14. ASPIRA Meetings.....	230
a. Staff.....	25
b. Unit.....	49
c. Supervisory.....	74
d. Other.....	82

TOTAL AMOUNT OF FINANCIAL AID AWARDED  
1969

Educational Opportunity Grants.....	\$76,665
Work Study.....	9,995
State Loan.....	36,950
Federal Loan.....	11,826
National Defense Student Loan.....	28,630
Incentive Award.....	11,800
State Scholarship.....	22,690
Institutional Scholarship.....	142,956
Miscellaneous Scholarship.....	25,181
Total.....	<hr/> \$367,683

As of July 1969